

Message Text

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17

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSC-10

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 SAM-01 SCS-03 SCA-01

PC-10 AID-20 OPR-02 SY-10 A-01 NEA-10 OC-06 CCO-00

SCCT-02 USSS-00 NIC-01 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

IO-14 DRC-01 /163 W

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FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2505

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO SECDEF IMMEDIATE

CINCUSNAVEUR IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR IMMEDIATE

DIRNSA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0112

E. O. 11652 : GDS (1)

TAGS : PINS, ET

SUBJ : MILITARY REVOLT

REFS : A) ASMARA 108; B) ADDIS 2210

1. CONGEN BELIEVES LOCAL SITUATION MAY BE DESCRIBED AS
INVISIBLE REVOLUTION. IT IS INVISIBLE BECAUSE ON SURFACE
THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO INDICATION THAT ANYTHING IS ABNORMAL.
IT IS REVOLUTION BECAUSE THOSE WHO STARTED ACTION AS STRIKERS
OR MUTINEERS HAVE OVERTURNED GOVERNMENT AND, AT LEAST AT
ASMARA AND MASSAWA, HAVE THEMSELVES TAKEN OVER EFFECTIVE CONTROL
OF GOVERNMENTAL FUNCTIONS. THUS, CONGEN IS DROPPING TERM
"DISSIDENTS" AND ADOPTING TERM "REBELS".

2. INVISIBILITY OF WHAT SO FAR HAS BEEN BLOODLESS COUP,
COMBINED WITH EFFICIENCY OF REBEL OPERATIONS, ATTESTS TO
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EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH DEGREE OF COMPETENCE AND KNOW-HOW ON

PART OF THOSE WHO ARE RUNNING SHOW AT ASMARA. SEVERAL LOCAL FOREIGN BUSINESSMEN HAVE INFORMED ME OF PROMPT DECISIONS AND ACTIONS TAKEN BY REBELS WHEN PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO THEIR ATTENTION THROUGH ANY AVAILABLE GOVERNMENTAL MECHANISM. FOR EXAMPLE, ITALIAN INDUSTRIALIST BARATTOLO TOLD ME LAST NIGHT HE HAD HAD PROBLEM IN MOVING COTTON FROM WESTERN ERITREA TO ASMARA, THAT HE HAD INFORMED LOCAL AUTHORITIES THROUGH AVAILABLE FACILITIES OF PROBLEM, AND THAT PROMPT DECISION HAD BEEN HANDED DOWN AUTHORIZING AND ASSISTING TRUCK MOVEMENTS. ANOTHER SOURCE HAS INFORMED ME THAT LOCAL POWER PLANT (SEDAO) WAS RUNNING OUT OF FUEL, AND THAT WHEN PROBLEM WAS BROUGHT TO ATTENTION OF INVISIBLE AUTHORITIES, ORDER WAS ISSUED PROMPTLY TO MOVE FUEL FROM MASSAWA TO ASMARA. GASOLINE DISTRIBUTORS ALSO REPORT THAT GAS IS BEING MOVED FROM MASSAWA TO ASMARA TODAY. ANOTHER SOURCE HAS INFORMED ME THAT HE WENT TO POST OFFICE TODAY AND FOUND IN HIS BOX A LETTER (AIR MAIL) THAT HAD BEEN POSTMARKED IN ROME LAST AUGUST. MAIL APPARENTLY HAD BEEN SITTING IN BAGS AT POST OFFICE FOR MONTHS, AND CONCLUSION IS THAT INVISIBLE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN ACTION TO MOVE IT. OTHER ROUTINE ACTIVITIES OF GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS ARE CONTINUING VIRTUALLY WITHOUT INTERRUPTION OR ANY ADVERSE EFFECTS.

3. ON STREETS OF TOWN THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO EVIDENCE THAT COUP IS TAKING PLACE. UNIFORMED DEPLOYED MILITARY AND POLICE FORCES ARE FEW IN NUMBER AND HIGHLY DISCIPLINED. LAST NIGHT THREE UNIFORMED SOLDIERS RETURNED TO POST GUARDING BACK GATE OF CONSULATE GENERAL. THESE GUARDS HAD BEEN POSTED FOR PAST YEAR BUT WERE WITHDRAWN LAST WEEKEND. THEIR REAPPEARANCE SUGGESTS THAT COMMAND ELEMENT HAS REVIEWED CUSTOMARY PROCEDURES PREVIOUSLY IN EFFECT AND HAS ACTED TO RE-ESTABLISH SUCH PROCEDURES. MORE IMPORTANTLY, GUARDS NOW ON DUTY ARE MUCH MORE ALERT AND DISCIPLINED THAN PREVIOUSLY. THERE ARE SIMILAR APPEARANCES THROUGHOUT TOWN, INCLUDING IEG MILITARY AND POLICE GUARDS AT VARIOUS KAGNEW TRACTS. IN MOVING ABOUT TOWN, I GAINED IMPRESSION THAT LARGE PART OF SECOND DIVISION MAY BE DEPLOYED WITHOUT UNIFORMS. YESTERDAY, FOR EXAMPLE, I NOTED UNUSUAL NUMBER OF YOUNG HEALTHY LOOKING

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MALES WEARING OBVIOUSLY NEW CIVILIAN TROUSERS AND SHIRTS.

4. PEOPLE OF TOWN APPEAR TO BE ALMOST FULLY IN SUPPORT OF REBELS. WHEN ADDIS DELEGATION ARRIVED YESTERDAY, CROWD ON STREET FROM AIRPORT CHEERED ENTHUSIASTICALLY AND HAPPILY. BOTH UPPER AND LOWER CLASSED SEEM TO BE PLEASED WITH TURN OF EVENTS, AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO ADVERSE MANIFESTATIONS. ONE SOURCE HAS SUGGESTED THAT ELF MAY IN NEXT FEW DAYS

ATTEMPT TO CAPITALIZE ON SITUATION WITH ACT OF URBAN TERRORISM IN EFFORT TO CREATE PANIC. HOWEVER, CURRENT AUTHORITIES ARE BELIEVED TO BE AWARE OF SUCH POSSIBILITY AND TO BE MORE CAPABLE THAN PREDECESSORS IN GUARDING AGAINST THIS. CONGEN CONCURS WITH ADDIS 2203 THAT NO E&E MEASURES ARE CALLED FOR AT PRESENT. FUTURE SITUATION IN THIS REGARD WILL DEPEND UPON ACTIONS BY EMPEROR TO ACCEDE TO DEMANDS BEING MADE BY REBELS. RE QUERY IN PARA 5 OF ADDIS 2210, I DOUBT THAT RESIGNATION OF PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET WILL SATISFY REBELS AND RETURN THEM TO CONTROL OF COMMANDER-IN-CHPXUNLESS LATTER AGREES TO APPOINT AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND CHIEF OF STAFF PERSONS NOMINATED BY REBELS. ALSO, REBELS ARE VERY STRONG IN DEMAND FOR INCREASES IN PAY AND ALLOWANCES.

5. QUESTION OF WHO WILL BE NEW PRIME MINISTER ALSO IS OF KEY IMPORTANCE. ONE WIDE-SPREAD RMOR HERE IS THAT THERE IS "HIGH-LEVEL" AND SKILLFUL POLITICAN BEHIND STRIKE/ MUTINY/REBELLION SCENARIO. RUMOR BEARERS WHEN QUERIED USUALLY IDENTIFY THIS PERSON AS RAS ASRATE KASSA, FORMER GOVERNOR GENERAL OF ERITREA (FOR 7 YEARS), AND CURRENT PRESIDENT OF CROWN COUNCIL. I KNOW ASRATE VERY WELL AND WOULD BET FIFTY/FIFTY ON POSSIBILITY.

6. THERE ALSO IS RUMOR THAT EMPEROR WOULD LIKE TO APPOINT GRANDSON AND PALACE FAVORIT REAR ADMIRAL DESTA TO KEY POSITION. DESTA IS NOT WELL REGARDED BY ASRATE OR BY OTHER KEY FIGURES IN CIVILIAN AND MILITARY STRUCTURES, BUT HE CONCEIVABLY COULD BE USEFUL TO EITHER OR BOTH GROUPS AS A FIGUREHEAD. WHEREABOUTS OF DESTA CURRENTLY UNKNOWN. HE LEFT MASSAWA IN M-41 AND SINCE YESTERDAY I HAVE HEARD THAT HE (A) VOLUNTARILY RETURNED TO MASSAWA YESTERDAY AFTERNOON AND IS IN CUSTODY THERE (BELIEVED CONFIDENTIAL

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TO BE FALSE); (B) THAT HIS SHIP WAS PICKED UP AT 1600Z YESTERDAY ON DJIBOUTI RADAR SCREEN; AND (C) THAT HE SAILED INTO ASSAB AND WAS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY THERE. WE STILL ARE ATTEMPTING TO LOCATE HIM.

7. AS OF 1130 LOCAL TODAY (0830Z) ASMARA IS CALM AND QUIET WITH NO EVIDENCE VISIBLE OF ANY UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES. LTG ASSEFA DIMESSIE PRESUMABLY MAY RETURN FOR FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS, BUT WE HEARD FROM VERY RELIABLE SOURCE YESTERDAY THAT REBELS WERE INSISTING UPON NOTIFICATION THAT EMPEROR WOULD ACCEDE TO THEIR DEMANDS THROUGH PUBLIC NOTICE OVER RADIO AND IN PRESS. RABIDA

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